Sandridge Primary School

Policy for Children Known to a Social Worker:

Children Looked After, Previously Looked After, Children with a Social Worker and those in Kinship Care

Based on Hertfordshire Children's Services Model Policy – Sept 2025

The policy was reviewed and ratified by the Governing Body on 29th September 2026.

This policy will be reviewed in full by the Governing Body every two years.

It is due for review in September 2028.

CHILDREN KNOWN TO A SOCIAL WORKER (CKSW)

Policy Objective:
This policy aims to:

- summarise how we will meet statutory guidance to promote the educational achievement and welfare of all Children Looked After (CLA) and Children Previously Looked After (CPLA) on the roll of our school
- outline how our school will promote the education of Children with a Social Worker (CSW) and Children in Kinship Care

Name of the Designated Teacher for CLA and CPLA

Lisa Harrison

Name of the Designated School Governor for CLA and CPLA

Jane Sykes

Name of the Designated Safeguarding Lead with responsibility for children with a Social Worker

Lisa Harrison

At Sandridge School we will ensure that children looked after (CLA) and children previously looked after (CPLA) have access to excellent educational provision and are prioritised for additional support through school-based interventions to achieve as well as possible, in accordance with the DfE guidance.

Intention

As a school, we acknowledge and understand the intention of the Virtual School Head Role Extension to Children with a Social Worker, that **extends** the role of the Virtual School Head to use strategic influence with **schools and social care** to improve the educational outcomes for all children known to a social worker and those in kinship care arrangements.

We understand that this guidance includes all children who are most vulnerable and educationally disadvantaged, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

We recognise that our school plays a vital role in providing a supportive and stable base for all children known to a social worker including CLA, and in promoting their academic, social, and emotional development. We understand the need for annual whole school staff training on trauma-informed and attachment-aware practice in the school, so that all adults, both

non-teaching and teaching, fully understand and are sensitive to the barriers to learning that children can experience.

We will create an environment in which all children have a strong sense of belonging and feel valued and nurtured.

Our aim is to establish a safe and inclusive culture within the school to support the well-being of both staff and pupils with a shared understanding of the inter-relationship between learning, well-being and safeguarding.

We will use our school policies and practice to create a '*calm, safe and supportive environment where children and young people want to attend and where they can learn and thrive'.*

We will do this in recognition of the wider context where; '*The behaviour policy is the starting point for laying out our vision and is one of the important ways this school culture is communicated to pupils, staff, and parents and carers'*. **DfE: Behaviour in schools Advice for headteachers and school staff** February 2024. We will embed the principles and best practice for Promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges Children, families and school staff are still recovering from the impact of the Covid pandemic. As a school, we see each academic year as an opportunity to develop our school staff to engage in positive relational practice to enable all children to achieve the best possible outcomes, and to prioritise wellbeing for all within the school community.

The Virtual School Attachment Aware and Trauma Informed Toolkit training will support a greater understanding of diversity and equality and will enable all staff to better understand the behaviours of all children.

We have delivered the Attachment-Aware and Trauma-Informed Toolkit training to all school staff and will develop a school response based on the principles that it promotes. We have delivered further training on relational practice supported by Therapeutic Thinking and Positive Regard. Our staff feel confident in de-escalation, restorative and relational practices. This professional learning for all staff will help to create an ethos where all of those working within the school feel confident in reporting and evidencing issues relating to equality and diversity. Promoting an inclusive environment is key to the well-being of all pupils, as is a commitment to deepening pupils' understanding of "democracy, individual liberty, the rule of law and mutual respect and tolerance" (Ofsted 2019).

Our Behaviour Policy is for staff and pupils alike. We understand that positive behaviour management is completely influenced by the relationships we foster between all adults and children who are part of this school, and that learning is taught as well as 'caught'.

Our school's culture and values are manifested through the behaviour of all members of the school community - parents and carers, teachers, ancillary staff, visiting specialists and pupils. Our expectation is everyone within the school will interact with respect, kindness, and integrity.

Equality and Diversity:
The implementation of this Policy requires a reflection on those learners who have many overlapping experiences: discrimination because of a protective characteristic, SEND, poverty, other adverse childhood experiences. Supporting these learners to achieve will raise achievement for all. The expectation is that all learners receive a high-quality, ambitious education; that is inclusive of all learners. All schools and other education providers must meet their statutory duties, including those under the Equality Act 2010. All protected characteristics are supported to enable Hertfordshire schools to provide opportunity for all. See here for the Hertfordshire strategy.

We recognise the need to train all staff to reflect on their values, beliefs and professional responses to children. We will promote self-awareness and will facilitate regular reflective space for staff to prevent unconscious bias and to ensure that expectations and aspirations are high for every child.

Impact

This section sets out the expected impact to be achieved through the implementation of the policy in school. Leadership will ensure that:

- a safe and secure environment is provided where educational progress and stability is always central to the planning,
- all adults are equipped with the understanding of the impact that the experience of trauma and neglect can have on the way children form relationships and learn,
- staff feel confident about relational approaches to behaviour management or regulation strategies that take into consideration what has been learnt from recent research on the effect of trauma on the brain and the potential long-term impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs),
- the gap between the attainment of children who have experienced ACEs and their peers is narrowed and that progress is accelerated **through appropriate interventions and support**,
- school-based interventions are accessed, even if they do not meet the criteria for that intervention see guidance here and to use the allocated Pupil Premium *Plus* (PP+) to ensure effective impact,
- all CLA to have at least termly Personal Education Planning (ePEP) meetings each academic year and for the joint planning and quality first teaching to have measurable impact on each child's learning on a daily basis (see guidance here),
- all adults provide sensitive, child-led support, with at least one key adult with whom the child or young person has a trusted relationship and who will act as an advocate for them and take a special interest in their progress in all school activities,
- school systems facilitate nurturing support, which includes strong relationships between school staff, parents or carers and children,
- Children Looked After and Children Previously Looked After are positively identified within school policies and procedures, with their needs explicitly considered and provided for,
- the Behaviour Policy maintains clear boundaries and expectations about behaviour, and it is understood that all behaviour is communication and staff respond with compassion and care. Sanctions that shame and ostracise children from their peers, school,

community or family are avoided. An inclusive culture and positive school ethos is created for every pupil.

- all children and their families feel part of the school community; they will be actively welcomed, involved and engaged in the school community, and
- links to other relevant school policies that reference CLA and CPLA or Children with a Social Worker or Children in Kinship Care can be found here: https://www.sandridge.herts.sch.uk/information/policies/

(See also the Virtual School 'Kinder by Design' checklist for revision of school behaviour policy).

Statutory Educational Planning for all Children Looked After

Statutory Personal Education Plans (ePEP)

The school will ensure that every CLA on roll has a Personal Education Planning (ePEP) meeting that is reviewed termly, within the statutory care planning framework, and in collaboration with the social worker, carer, and other relevant professionals. In any one school year there will be at least 3 PEP meetings for each CLA.

The Headteacher and Governing Body:

- will ensure that the Designated Teacher for Children Looked After and Children Previously Looked After has qualified teacher status, appropriate seniority in the leadership team and time and experience to fulfil this statutory role. DTs will have a minimum of 2 days training per year to remain fully informed,
- will monitor the role of the Designated Teacher to ensure that all CLA and CPLA make accelerated progress and to ensure that the whole school staff receive appropriate training,
- will expect and enable significant communication, joint planning, and training with the Designated Safeguarding Lead for the school so that there is a full and informed response to understanding the needs of children with a Social Worker within the school and a collaborative approach with Social Care, and
- will complete both sections of the Report to Governors (formerly CLASEF) in an annual report, sharing their plan for improved outcomes for disadvantaged children, informing the Hertfordshire Virtual School of the school's developing policy and practice and accounting for the efficient and effective spend of the PP+ funding for CLA and CPLA.

The Designated Teacher for Children Looked After and Children Previously Looked After is a Statutory Post and in 2026-2027 is Lisa Harrison; Headteacher & DSL.

She is a qualified teacher, and will promote improved educational life chances for CLA and PLA by:

- ensuring that the CLA or CPLA has access to quality first teaching
- tracking the progress of CLA and CPLA across the curriculum using data, teacher reports and book looks
- ensuring that the PP+ is used effectively and efficiently
- performing a coordinating role with school staff and outside agencies
- ensuring effective communication with the school's assigned Education Adviser from the Virtual School

- developing expertise in the field of CLA and CPLA, including attachment theory and trauma- informed practice
- delivering the Virtual School training: 'An introduction to Attachment-Aware and Trauma-Informed Practice' to the whole school
- providing and attending training and offering advice to the whole school staff
- promoting a school culture which is supportive, relationship-based and has high expectations for CLA and CPLA
- regularly reporting to the Governing Body on the attainment of CLA and CPLA and staff training needs for working with this group
- working alongside the Designated Safeguarding Lead to support and promote the education of Children with a Social Worker and Children in Kinship Care
- prioritising CLA and PCLA for school-based additional support
- ensuring that CLA and CPLA are not overlooked for positions of student responsibility within the school because of their care status
- completing the annual Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) of each CLA as requested, to inform their annual CLA health review.

Roles and Responsibilities: Education planning for all Children with a Social Worker and those in Kinship Care

The Headteacher and Governing Body are committed to promoting improved educational life chances for all children through high quality learning and teaching and a drive for best possible outcomes for each child.

Children known to a social worker achieve significantly less well than others at all stages of education and poor educational outcomes persist even after social work involvement ends.

All staff will promote improved educational life chances for all Children with a Social Worker and those in Kinship Care, by:

- attending relevant training, including the Virtual School toolkit training on 'Attachment-Aware and Trauma-Informed Practice' (to be found on the Virtual School website)
- providing accurate information and data when asked by the Designated Teacher or Designated Safeguarding Lead
- referring to the Designated Teacher or Designated Safeguarding Lead for advice
- developing skills to be able to work in a relational way
- promoting a relational culture to help fully engage children and make rapid progress through access to any additional school-based support available and from quality first teaching
- be aware of the existence of potential unconscious bias about children with a social worker and will mitigate against such a situation through careful reflection and ensuring that all decisions about these children are justifiable, equitable and fair.

Attendance:

School attendance procedures will reflect the specific needs of all children with a Social Worker to ensure that they have good school attendance and punctuality. Securing good attendance cannot be seen in isolation, and effective practices for improvement will involve close interaction with schools, the local authority and other local partners.

Where there is a concern about attendance or punctuality, the school will contact the social worker, and other professionals, including the Virtual School and Attendance Team, promptly.

Admissions/ Transitions:

School procedures to support CLA and CPLA during admission and transition are enshrined in the statutory codes of practice for admission:

- prioritising CLA and CPLA at the point of admission

However, it is recommended that for all children known to a social worker who are in the process of admission to the school or transition from school elsewhere:

- there is a swift transfer of information between schools that may include school visits and at times of transition, teaching at the previous school
- early identification of staff mentor and peer buddy
- additional support and planning at times of transition
- structured activities to 'say goodbye', in recognition of the impact of broken attachments and loss

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities:

All staff will work creatively to secure accelerated and rapid progress for all Children Looked After (CLA), Children Previously Looked After (CPLA), Children with a Social Worker (CSW), Children in Kinship Care who have special educational needs and disabilities by ensuring:

- that all plans are coordinated, appropriate interventions identified, and teaching to the plan is systematic
- that they are accessing school-based targeted support which is 'additional to and different from' the universal and additional needs provision
- that progress is regularly monitored and reviewed, in line with the SEND Code of Practice
- that any work undertaken by non-teaching staff has teacher over-sight
- that with the school SENCo, the EHCP review is held in a timely way with all relevant professionals invited and their views obtained.

Safeguarding:

School staff will be vigilant for any safeguarding issues which can impact particularly on any child with a Social Worker by: familiarising themselves with the school's Child Protection policy and the current KCSIE '*DfE: Keeping Children Safe in Education' (Sept 2026*) guidance2 if there are any safeguarding concerns.

Suspensions and Exclusion:

We have reviewed the school behaviour policy (*May 2026)* alongside the Behaviour in Schools Guidance 2022 and the new Suspension and Permanent Exclusion from

Maintained Schools, Academies and Pupil Referral Units in England, Including Pupil Movement, guidance (2022).

- We understand that the purpose of our Behaviour Policy is to provide all adults and children in our school with a safe, inclusive, learning environment in which everybody is respected.
- We will make every effort to avoid excluding a Child Looked After (CLA) or Child Previously Looked After (CPLA), in recognition of the increased risk this poses in terms of them quickly disengaging from the school, due to their early experience of broken attachments and loss.
- Where a Child Looked After is at risk of suspension or exclusion, the designated teacher will contact the linked Virtual School Education Adviser as soon as possible s they can help the school decide how to support the child to improve their behaviour and avoid exclusion becoming necessary
- Where a Child Previously Looked After is at risk of suspension or exclusion, the Designated Teacher will talk to the child's parents or guardians before seeking the advice of the Virtual School on avoiding exclusion.
- We will explore alternative positive options which prioritise the young person's learning.
- We will keep the number of days out of the in-school routine to a strict minimum.
- We will always contact The Virtual School for support to find an effective solution which best meets the needs of the child looked after.
    - We understand that 'where a looked-after child (CLA) is likely to be subject to a suspension or permanent exclusion, the Designated Teacher (DT) should contact the local authority's VSH as soon as possible to discuss support for the individual child to reduce harm to the child's future education and to plan the best way to resolve the situation'. (Section 60: School suspensions and permanent exclusions)
- We will use the following methods to avoid suspending or excluding a child known to a Social Worker or a Child in Kinship Care;
    - Work together with parents/carers to put a plan for improvement in place
    - Work together with external professionals to put in place as much additional support as possible
    - Ensure pastoral provision / support is in place
    - Ensure a consistent approach by all staff

We understand that the Equality Act 2010 requires schools to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils. This duty can, in principle, apply both to the suspensions and permanent exclusions process and to the disciplinary sanctions imposed.
Under the Children and Families Act 2014, governing boards of relevant settings must use their *'best endeavours'* to ensure the appropriate special educational provision is made for pupils with SEN, which will include any support in relation to behaviour management that they need because of their SEN. Our school procedures are in place to reduce the risk of exclusion of children with special educational needs.

The Headteacher, Designated Teacher, Designated Safeguarding Lead and Governing Body will ensure that all staff are briefed on the Statutory Guidance and practice outlined in this policy.

Date: 29th September 2026

Review date: September 2028

The Hertfordshire Virtual School for Children Looked After

- *Website*: www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/virtualschool
- *Twitter*: @VS_HCC
- *Email*: virtualschool@hertfordshire.gov.uk
- *Phone*: 01992 556915

September 2026

Appendix 1 – the Revised New Duty June 2022

The New Duty Update 2022/23

Promoting the education of children with a social worker (publishing.service.gov.uk)

The Government's Children in Need review (2019) evidenced for the first time that at least 1.6 million children have needed a social worker between 2012/13 and 2017/18 – equivalent to 1 in 10 of all children. The review showed that these children do significantly worse than others at all stages of education and that poor educational outcomes persist even after social work involvement ends.

VSH leadership is vital now more than ever given the impact the pandemic has had on the learning of all children, but none more so than the most vulnerable. Children with a social worker (CWSW) are around 3 times more likely to be persistently absent from school and between 2 to 4 times more likely to be permanently excluded from school than their peers.

Who are CWSW?

Includes all children who have been assessed as needing or previously needing a social worker **within the past 6 years due to safeguarding and/or welfare reasons**. It includes all children aged 0 to 18 across all education settings subject to a CiN plan or a Child Protection plan.

The new strategic role of the VSH

- Make visible the disadvantages that children with a social worker can experience, enhancing partnerships between education settings and local authorities, including with children's social care.
- Promote practice that supports children's engagement in education, recognising that attending an education setting can be an important factor in helping to keep children safe from harm.
- Level up children's outcomes and narrow the attainment gap so every child can reach their potential. This will include helping to ensure that children with a social worker benefit from support to recover educationally from the impact of the pandemic.

Identify needs and address barriers

- Use data and analysis to understand and monitor the cohort's needs, including making links to local strategic priorities e.g., attendance, suspension, and permanent exclusion rates.
- Share knowledge and expertise to strengthen how education settings and social care understand the impact of adversity on learning and educational outcomes of children.
- Promote professional practice for education settings and local authorities.

Attendance

- For children with a social worker, attending school is also a protective factor, offering a safe space when home is not, away from the threat of gangs, crime, or exploitation.
- VSHs may wish to strengthen engagement with DTs through established local networks to share advice, best practice or training to support attendance and raise awareness of the barriers these children can face.

Elective home education

- When a family notifies the local authority of their intention to home educate, we recommend that local authorities, schools, and other key professionals (such as social workers) work together to coordinate a meeting with parents/carers where possible.
- This is particularly pertinent if a child has SEN or has a social worker.
- VSHs should refer to the Government guidance on elective home education.
- Introduced in the Schools Bill in May 2022, the Government will require each local authority to establish a registration system for children not in school. The measures will make each authority responsible for maintaining a register of children not in school, including electively home-educating children, and have a duty to provide support to those families where they request it.

Mental health and well-being

- VSHs should work with their local authority lead for mental health, responsible for linking with education settings.
- The VSH should ensure that mental health training includes:
  - the value of a graduated approach to assessing, understanding, and meeting the social, emotional, and mental health needs of children and young people with a social worker
  - how to identify signs of potential mental health issues for children with a social worker and how to access further assessment and support where necessary
  - understanding the impact of issues that children with a social worker can experience and that settings are able to offer targeted support to meet the needs of these children
  - how to recognise the value of engaging the child's voice in the process of identification and support.
- VSHs may also want to work with individual school senior mental health leads (SMHL), where the role exists, to ensure children with a social worker are factored into the school's strategy on mental health and well-being.

Recovery programmes

- VSHs should be aware of the following initiatives, given the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on CWSW, and work with education settings to ensure these children are able to access the following support:
  - The National Tutoring Programme
  - The Summer School Programme

- Recovery Premium

SEN

- A significant proportion of children with a social worker may also be identified as having Special Educational Needs (SEN) or may be disabled.
- VSHs should work strategically with the local authority Head of SEND and, where appropriate, with school leaders and SENCOs, to ensure that education settings adopt a graduated approach.

Advice and guidance

- VSHs are not being asked to work with individual children with a social worker as replicating existing professional relationships and support would be counterproductive and burdensome to children and their families.
- VSHs will be best placed to offer advice and information to professionals who are providing direct support to these children.
- Identify and establish links with key professionals e.g., DSLs, social workers, headteachers, governors, SENCOs, SMHLs, other local authority officers, including Designated Social Care Officers (DSCOs) for SEND.
- Provide advice on evidence-based interventions that can address barriers to learning, such as those highlighted by What Works for Children's Social Care.
- Engage with research organisations to help develop good practice and build a strong evidence base for what works to improve outcomes of children with social workers.
- Support education settings and social care to be creative and thoughtful in building relationships with children and families.

Research

- VSHs will be invited to participate in research to capture emerging practice and contribute to the development of a strong evidence base for how they can effectively promote the educational outcomes of children with social workers.
- The Department will ask all local authorities to share data and information about how their VSH has been supporting children with a social worker and what funding has been used for that support.
- Some local authorities, including VSHs, their teams, and partner agencies, will be invited to take part in focused interviews to build detailed case studies.

Appendix 2

Alternative Provision: To be read in conjunction with the 2022 Behaviour in Schools guidance here

We will make every effort to ensure that any arrangements for provision alternative to daily attendance at school will be:

- a plan that will retain the child with a Social Worker on the roll of the school or clarify in writing which educational establishment will be responsible for essential reporting and accountable for the PP+ if CLA or PLA
- an agreed part of the overall ePEP for the child if CLA
- full time (32.5 hrs) or contribute to full time attendance and be of high quality
- meet the educational needs of the child with a Social Worker
- will provide the opportunity to make rapid progress in the course of study provided by the setting
- will be monitored regularly and that any statutory planning, for example the Child Protection Plan or ePEPs will include both the school and the alternative provider

Multi-Agency Working:

- **School staff will make every effort to** develop positive professional relationships with colleagues from other agencies, especially colleagues from Social Care, and facilitate their work. This will enable colleagues to successfully perform their roles and positively impact on the education and wider needs of children with a Social Worker.
- The Virtual School **Professional Partnership Programme** is a response to the '*Duty to promote the education of children with a social worker'* and offers the opportunity for schools and social workers to swap roles for a day to increase the understanding of the roles and responsibilities and promote better joint practice. The Virtual School website has more information about this work.

Appendix 3. Risk Assessment to Support Behaviour Policy

The importance of effective pupil assessment

Appropriate and detailed risk assessments should be undertaken for pupils who often display high levels of dysregulation in school/college, to set out the support measures available and in use, to prevent escalation. The risk assessment should focus on the child/student in question and not the other pupils within the school or class.

Children and young people who are excluded on multiple occasions

Where multiple exclusions of a child or young person have taken place, it should highlight to the school/college that the support provision being used/in place is not working. In these instances, schools should seek additional support in line with the LA or Virtual School offer for a staged intervention policy.

In line with the demands of the New Duty for 'children with a social worker', the education authority will monitor and track learners who are excluded on multiple occasions and help schools consider that **where a child or young person is excluded on multiple occasions that a different intervention is required.** It is important that schools and education authorities are aware of the impact that exclusion can have, particularly within those groups of children where exclusions are more prevalent: those with an assessed or declared disability; looked after children and young people; children and young people from the most deprived areas; and those with an additional support need (particularly if that support need is social, emotional and/or behavioural).

The Virtual School advise that risk, health, and safety assessments should be carried out using a trauma-informed approach to determine any potential concerns arising from the child or young person's presentation. The assessment should identify any steps deemed necessary to **support the child or young person in preventing harm to themselves or others and improving their well-being**. The risk and health and safety assessments should be shared with the child or young person, their parents, and all staff who are involved with the child or young person.

Behaviour policies should reflect that a range of factors may predispose a pupil to dysregulation, disaffection and depression or other mental health conditions, which would benefit from effective risk assessment so that procedures are in place to help create conditions for early intervention and a school culture in which teachers can teach and pupils can learn effectively.

Understanding the evidence that highlights the impact that exclusion can have will support informed decision-making about the appropriateness of an exclusion or suspension; but will also recognise that suspension when used in a proportionate and supportive way can have a positive outcome for the child or young person and the wider school community.

Therapeutic Thinking

Therapeutic Thinking is the local authority's preferred approach to supporting positive behaviour management in schools and settings. This approach forms part of the authority's

behaviour strategy. It has been agreed through the SEND Executive and forms part of Hertfordshire's Local Offer.

What is Therapeutic Thinking?

Therapeutic Thinking Hertfordshire is a therapeutic approach to positive behaviour management and is already well established in many of our education settings and services. The approach is based on the following principles:

- shared focus on inclusion of all children and young people within their educational settings
- a shared set of values and beliefs
- open and shared communication
- a shared commitment to diversion and de-escalation
- shared risk management
- shared reparation, reflection and restoration

Email: TherapeuticThinking@hertfordshire.gov.uk
Tel: 01707 281587